

Gallery

Tsunami Notebook by Margo Berdeshevsky



Margo Berdeshevsky

Beachfront Aceh

—Sumatra—the epicenter—2005

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It's too hot not to swim. But in their dissolved cry?
or is it only the insects? or it begins again because
the world only ends in one place, & not in another.

When it begins again, one guitar in the shadows whose
darling died in December water. A cat, blind in one eye.
An inchworm, bursting.

A funeral tea with green sweet-cakes where only women
in *jilbabs* come, knees to the left. A man we could not save
with the laying on of hands.

High blood pressure, leg sores, the heartbeats like
hummingbirds, the deep-voiced equator reciting
Allahhhhhhh, Allahhhhhh, her twelve toes, curling.

A fever & a yellow cur, hunting. Crazy-woman who is
not crazy anymore, praying & praying, & praying.

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The reel of bulldozers moving shore-washed & its bloated
broken : garbage & ghost & ghastly in loops, repeating.
In verses of the truth down in a monsoon dawn.

When it begins again, an old heat, white, imploding.
There were rebels, but not in the open green. Was horror under
a head-scarved sky. Laughter, under the roofs before they

ruined, breakfasting. Horror is not made by any
hands that can be seen, here. Nor by silver monkeys, staring.

There are children who were hung in trees in a mother's
sarong, to be safe. Motherless, safe & staring. Old
women, softened with cotton yearning. A wise-man of
a village with so few to be wise for, any longer.

Pickaxes, ready for their ditches. Who knows these feet?
God. Incantation, for the stagnant, the breeding. The waters & who
stands beside them. Sediment. Mercy, not really in sight.

For tomorrow, the heat & a free moon. Golden. Exaggerating.
For tomorrow, the tired, left, for the strong. A star, one star,
falling.
All that loves, loving. Even then.

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*note: this poem is previously published on the Tupelo Press Poetry Project site under different title:
(We leave the beaches mostly for the tourists.)